

S vs Rebirth 421

Chapter 421 Arguments

The two squads had their own circumstances. Although the Demon Hunting Squad was a bit disappointing, they had just returned from their mission, so they didn't know what had happened to their base.

They thought their captain wanted them to solve this problem since he focused on the enemies ahead, but it seemed to be not the case.

The muscular guy couldn't help but fall silent this time, knowing it was better not to say anything right now. After all, there might be bad rumors spreading from this baron's mouth. Although he wasn't afraid of him, this city and their headquarters had a good relationship. So, it wouldn't be wise to provoke him.

"Hu..." The guy took a deep breath as if rethinking the situation. He then said, "I know that you want us to focus on those two nests, but we couldn't really allow your soldiers to go there without any trump card."

"We'll leave one of our fighters with your soldiers. This way, there is a Spirit Master in your army, and you, a peak Spirit Master, should be able to protect the city in case something goes wrong."

The baron, Paul, and the rest of the Demon Relief Squad were startled to see how fast the guy calmed down and looked at the bigger picture. They thought he was all brawl and no brain, but it seemed they were wrong.

The baron paused for a moment before agreeing to his suggestion. "Alright. Let's do it that way. Though, are you sure you can hunt these demons without this one member?"

"You don't have to worry about us. We'll have to look at the condition of the nest first before making some adjustments. In any case, we're capable of stopping multiple Peak Level Demons if necessary."

The baron then suggested another thing. "If that's the case, can you, the Demon Relief Squad send someone to help them?"

Paul frowned. Although he didn't mind sending one of them to their squad, he didn't know whether this guy was a reliable leader or not.

Still, the baron had asked him personally. It would be bad if he rejected it instantly.

Whether it was fortunate or unfortunate, the guy simply shook his head. "There's no need for that, Sir Baron. We have enough personnel to complete our tasks. The Demon Relief Squad is not a fighting squad like us, so our combat ability is stronger than theirs. Even if we're lacking one member, we are still stronger."

"..." Paul and the others took their words back. Even if he became rational, the guy really loved to look down on other people.

At the very least, he seemed to have a cool head when making an important decision. So, the baron agreed. "Alright. In that case, I'll be relying on both of you. If you need any reinforcement, immediately inform the soldiers on the gate with this..."

The baron took out two insignia from his pockets. From its look, it was clear the insignia was his family crest.

They could immediately alert the soldiers if they needed to.

Both leaders took the insignia. Instead of leaving, Paul asked, "Do you mind if we take another look at this map? We want to check the supply route and see if there's something that needs to be fixed."

"Sure. I'll leave you here. If you need anything, I'll let my butler stay on the outside. So, notify him." The baron nodded.

Since there was no more request, he turned around and walked away, leaving these two groups inside.

In that instant, the tension rose as they glared at each other again.

"The Demon Hunting Squad will take care of the demons. You guys from the Demon Relief Squad can just fix the bridge." The muscular guy didn't hesitate to throw a mockery toward Paul's squad.

However, Paul didn't let it go just like that. He didn't care if the others smeared his reputation, but it was better if they didn't insult his people.

"As expected of the Demon Hunting Squad, all you can think of is hunting the demons like hunting dogs. Should I call you a dog instead? Come here, doggo..." Paul smirked.

Both of them narrowed their eyes. If they weren't in the mansion, they would have fought each other.

"Hmph. They're just a bunch of cowards. Just look at them, wearing something neat and even putting on some makeup. I bet they never hunt demons." A short-haired woman snorted. She had a long scar from her left eyebrow to her left cheek, increasing her fierceness. If one dared to approach her, she would have shown them what it meant to be dominated.

However, this woman also looked at Noel, who hid his face with the masquerade. At one glance, she knew Noel was handsome as long as he took off that mask.

But that feminine-looking Noel was something she hated the most. She laughed, "They even bring a baby here. How about becoming a boy first before going on a mission?"

Rose couldn't let go of that remark. She gritted her teeth and released her Spiritual Energy.

Suddenly, a figure appeared behind their new guy, trying to capture him.

As if feeling its presence, the short-haired woman's eyes flashed as she turned around, punching the figure in the face, only to realize it was just an illusion.

In that instant, Paul and the Demon Hunting Squad's Vice Captain released their punch while the others also unsheathed their weapons, pointing them at their enemy.

It only took them a moment for the tension to collapse.

However, there was one person who didn't get marked at all due to the difference in number and experience. It was none other than Noel.

Noel was standing between them with a smile. There were two runes next to him. The right one released twelve chains that locked the people's wrists, while the other was the Hardening Rune that strengthened the chains.

Noel said with a gentle smile as if trying to de-escalate the situation. "Alright. Let's stop here, shall we?"

Chapter 422 Agreement

"Alright. Let's stop here, shall we?"

"!!!" All of them widened their eyes, seeing the chain manage to reach them before they noticed.

The Demon Relief Squad already knew about Noel's runes, while the Demon Hunting Squad only saw it for the first time. But because of their lack of knowledge about Rune and Spirit Enchantment, they thought Noel was a Spirit ian.

The short-haired woman released her Spiritual Energy around her hand to rupture the chain, but surprisingly, it remained intact. The Demon Hunting Squad's Vice Captain even tried to rip it apart but to no avail. If he wanted to break free from this chain, he might need to exert more of his power. But it would end up destroying the mansion.

In the past three months, Noel had made a huge improvement like Anna. He had increased the levels of his runes and other Spirit Abilities.

This time, he used the max level Chain Bind Rune and Hardening Rune to stop them.

"Heh..." A man with slanted eyes smiled, looking at Noel as if he had managed to pique his interest. He raised his hands and said, "Let's stop here, shall we?"

The short-haired woman was unwilling since it meant she had to eat her own words. But her Vice Captain had let out a sigh and stated, "Alright. Let's stop here. Alright, Becky?"

"..." The short-haired woman snorted. "Just because you're the one asking it."

After she lost her spirit, the Vice Captain looked at Paul, who ended up turning to Noel as if asking him to retract the chain.

Noel then waved his hand, removing the runes. Since the tension had disappeared, Noel returned to his position as a member of the Demon Relief Squad.

"..." Paul paused for a moment before saying, "We're here to discuss our plan and situation. If your Demon Hunting Squad doesn't want to listen, then you're free to leave. However, the Demon Hunting Squad's opinion is necessary here, so will you leave or will you stay?"

Their Vice Captain knew the conflict had to end. No matter what, their squads were going to cooperate this time. The faster they completed the mission, the quicker they could go back to check their headquarters.

"Go on." He extended his hand, giving the opportunity to Paul.

"Then, Rose. If you may." Paul took a step back.

Rose nodded. Without hesitation, Rose put the pieces away and replaced them with her illusion. This time, the demons, the structure, and the area were easily visible.

Soon, a red line that connected this city, the neighboring town, and the fort appeared.

"This is the current supply line just by looking at this map. There is one nest located approximately five hundred meters from this line, while the other two are located within one kilometer of the bridge.

"It'll be hard to hunt the demons and protect the bridge at the same time. I don't mind if you think the bridge is not important, but the more the demons destroy the bridge, the longer it'll take to repair it. Hence, the longer the supply route for your headquarters gets fixed. You should know the consequences, right?"

"Hence, we have to mix our groups and split into two. The first group will become the vanguard that hunts all the demons while the second group will protect the bridge."

"Hmm?" The Demon Hunting Squad's Vice Captain noticed something and asked, "Why don't all the vanguard be filled with my squad?"

Rose had expected this question. She flawlessly laid down the reasons. "First of all, the vanguard has to know about the connection between the demons and the bridge. Unfortunately, we need an expert that can measure the situation and make sure the demons don't go all the way to the bridge. That's why you need our people.

"The same applies to the second group. Our squad might be good at defense and fixing the bridge, but your Demon Hunting Squad is more adept at searching for demons around. Hence, you will support us to make sure the place is safe."

Rose didn't explain it in the way their Demon Relief Squad was the best. This way, the Demon Hunting Squad should agree with their suggestion without hard feelings.

Even their Vice Captain couldn't really disagree with the plan as he perfectly understood the reasons. However, the problem was their number. "So, how do you plan to split the group?"

"Since you have promised the baron to lend one of your people, then we'll split the group this way." Rose used her illusion to show blue and green dots.

There were four dots near the bridge and the rest were next to them.

"Our Vice Captain is the strongest in strength, so he will stay behind with me. And your group is going to lend two people who are good at scouting and assassination to eliminate the demons. In the worst case, our Vice Captain will be there to handle the rest.

"As for the vanguards, it will consist of the members who are good at hunting demons," Rose explained.

The muscular guy thought for a moment and asked the guy with slanted eyes. "What do you think?"

"You can bring Becky and Shawn to the front while Brad and I will stay near the bridge. Hugo can go with the soldiers."

"Hmm? I can understand Becky, but why Shawn?"

"I believe she is planning to strike the nest one at a time, right?"

Rose nodded with a serious expression. "That's right. No matter how confident we are, we don't know the situation on the field, so we must first be cautious. This situation is the result of a huge battle happening in the fort, so you should understand my concern.

"Hence, we have to destroy one nest at a time. During that time, we don't know what will happen to the other nest. Hence, having three Spirit Masters and one Spirit Grandmaster near the bridge is the best option.

"This is the plan. If you have any objection, I don't mind explaining more to you."

Chapter 423 Meeting

"Alright. We'll go tomorrow morning. The battle won't be small, so I hope that everyone is in their best condition." Paul stated with a calm tone, knowing this was the best idea. "Is there any objection, Demon Hunting Squad?"

The muscular guy glanced at his adviser, who nodded his head. Since there was no problem, he finally agreed. "Fine. We shall do it according to your plan. Just don't become our burden."

"We don't know who will become the burden." Paul smirked, not fearing the challenge.

"Hmph."

Since both of them had reached an agreement, they came out of the room, finding the butler.

"We have reached an agreement and will go tomorrow morning. Please inform the lord about it."

The butler nodded with a serious expression. However, the baron had left some messages. "I know it's uncomfortable to sleep together in one room. And the mansion doesn't have enough room to accommodate all of you. Hence, the lord has prepared an inn for all of you."

"Oh?" Paul thought for a moment. It was great to get a place to sleep, especially a comfortable bed, before a battle. So, he certainly wouldn't reject it since the lord had prepared them. "Please give my thanks to the lord."

"Let me guide you to your inn." The butler nodded and extended his hand.

They left the mansion without hesitation since they had some preparation to do.

As soon as they reached their room, Noel immediately walked away, planning to leave the inn.

"I'm going to go around the town. Although the appearance looks good, I don't know if this town is truly good or not." Noel waved his hand as if saying they didn't need to follow him.

"Yeah." Noel was sleeping with Jonathan and Zion. Both of them exchanged nods, waving their hands. "Have fun."

Noel nodded and immediately left the inn. He had a different purpose for coming out. He had promised Anna they would meet every three months after all.

'Hmm... I don't know where to look. Has she reached this place yet?' Noel muttered. There were a lot of things he wanted to say to Anna. He also wanted to see how much Anna had progressed during the past three months.

His appearance was quite eye-catching, considering he wore a masquerade all the time.

Since it would be boring to not do anything while he was here, Noel tried to buy a bag of apples to feed some kids, wondering if he would find some amusing kids like the ones in the Demon Banner Army Headquarters or not.

Of course, he didn't plan to be attached to these ones.

But when he just finished buying the apple, someone stopped next to him and raised her hand. "Excuse me. Do you mind if you share the apples with me?"

The familiar voice completely startled him. The woman next to him wore a coat that covered her entire body, so he couldn't see her face. However, he still could see the blond hair resting on her chest.

"..." Noel sighed, knowing who she was. "Sure."

"Sorry for this... Even though this is your favorite fruit, I'm simply too hungry."

"Want to grab a bite then? I've just arrived here, so let's find a good restaurant, so we can eat peacefully."

"Hoho, are you asking me for a date?"

Noel was surprised by her reaction. Usually, she would be the one who got startled by the request, but this time, she had a lot more confidence in herself.

Noel extended his hand. "If you don't mind..."

Both of them smiled as they walked side by side without looking at each other. They looked like strangers from others' perspectives, but their movements were completely in sync.

It didn't take long before they found a restaurant that offered a small private room to talk. Noel didn't bother to rent the room and ordered some food.

Meanwhile, Anna finally took off her hood and released her blond hair. "Ah... this feels nice."

Noel smiled, feeling the change in Anna. From her expression alone, he could see a lot of confidence as if she had seen a lot of things. She also appeared to be more mature.

Although she often acted childish, it felt like this time, that character had been diminished.

Noel opened his mouth, saying, "It's been a while, Anna."

"Yeah. How are you?" That was right. The woman was none other than Noel's partner, Anna Stargaze.

"I could be better if you didn't appear right next to me so suddenly." Noel chuckled.

"It can't be helped. I have become an Inquisitor now, so this is the kind of work I've been doing." Anna chuckled.

"Your strength doesn't seem to have grown a lot, but... I can see a huge change in your temperament."

"Hehe, are you looking down on me?" Anna smirked. "If you do, you might get crushed by me before you know it."

"I'm looking forward to it. I hope that you also have grown here..." Noel pointed at his head.

"Are you telling me I'm stupid? For your information, I'm not stupid. You're just too abnormal." Anna harrumphed. However, her expression soon became serious as she added, "Of course, I won't rely on you completely this time."

"Hoh?" Noel smirked, feeling excited to see how much she had grown.

As if sensing the waitress outside, Anna suddenly put on her hood back. The waitress didn't say anything when she saw Anna. She just put the food on the table and hurriedly left them alone.

"Well, I guess we should eat first." Noel chuckled while looking at her. "You must be hungry after running all the way here."

"Of course. I'm hungry." Before Anna began to eat, she looked back at Noel and reminded him, "You haven't forgotten about our bet, right?"

"The betting game about who can give more information. Of course, I haven't forgotten about it. We can share our information later after we finish our food." Noel pointed at the food since they should finish it while it was still warm.

"True enough."

Chapter 424 Exchanging Information

"Fu... I'm full." Anna leaned back, feeling relaxed.

"Your manner has completely changed..." Noel shook his head helplessly. Unlike Anna, Noel still sat straight and didn't explicitly show his satisfaction.

"Hehe..." Anna scratched her cheek, embarrassed. "Since we're done eating, should we start?"

"Before that, let's place the bet. What will we bet this time?"

"If I win, you are going to massage me. I'm tired, you know." Anna made a smug smile as if she was planning to enjoy her time here.

Noel shook his head helplessly and said, "In that case, if I win, cook me something for tomorrow."

"Your favorite?"

Noel nodded.

"It's a deal." Anna smirked. "So, who's going to start?"

"We'll reveal one piece of information after another. And...Ladies first."

"Tsk." Anna clicked her tongue. But since she was confident with the amount of information she had, Anna stated, "Before that, do you know anything about Arbiters and the Inquisitor Organization?"

"I haven't heard about the organization, but I've heard about the Arbiters. There are twelve Arbiters, with your father being one of them."

"That's right." Anna nodded. "Arbiters are basically the Kingdom's hands. They're enforcing the rules and maintaining the stability of the kingdom. They're usually high-ranking nobles or super talented individuals related to the royal family like my teacher, the royal ian, or the Marshall.

"As for the organization, it's basically a similar place to the Demon Banner Army. You're to focus on racking up achievements and getting stronger so that you can challenge an Arbiter and take their spot."

"I see. So, what's the information related to this?" Noel nodded in understanding.

"It seems that the Royal Family involves my teacher to put pressure on my father so that he marries me to the crown prince. I don't care about marriage, but there is a catch here.

"Judging from my father's expression, it seems that they're pressuring him with your family. Yeah, I'm talking about how he forced the royal family to exile you instead of executing you. Once again, I'm sorry."

"..." Noel pinched the bridge of his nose. This was always a sensitive topic for both of them. But after three months of not meeting her, Noel didn't want to put too many thoughts on unnecessary stuff. Instead, he wanted to think about how the information benefited him.

"I see. It seems that your father was truly involved with my father's plan. I also have to apologize for making you involved..."

"No, no. I should be the one to apologize for asking to execute you."

"Let's drop this matter, shall we?"

"Mhm."

Both of them agreed, so Noel changed the topic. "Alright. We can now believe the letter my father left behind a bit, considering he shows such a reaction."

"Ah, right. He also showed a reaction when I told him I had killed you."

Noel frowned. Although he was his best friend's son, it didn't change the fact that his current condition was due to him. In other words, Noel harmed the Stargaze Family's position indirectly.

But from the way Anna described it, the marquis didn't seem happy. Instead, he looked disturbed.

Noel couldn't really determine his stance with just this. But he knew the marquis was deeply involved in his family's matters.

After confirming it, Noel gave the piece of information he got about the Third Prince.

"I met the Third Prince two months ago. Are you aware of the royal family's individual strengths? How is the king's Spirit Level?"

"Hmm? I'm not sure, but if I remember correctly, the king is only a Spirit Wielder because he has been doing a lot of work."

"Then, it makes me suspect the Third Prince." Noel narrowed his eyes. "Can you believe that the Third Prince can easily sense my presence?"

"Huh?" Anna looked down. Although Noel wasn't that good at hiding his presence, he, by no means, was bad at it.

To easily spot Noel, Anna realized the Third Prince was stronger than she thought.

'A Spirit Master or even a Spirit Grandmaster... It seems that after losing to his brother, the current king, the Third Prince continues to hone his Spirit Arts. This is weird... I don't think the royal family will grow that big unless they're a big genius... At the same time, I have never heard of the Third Prince being a genius in the Spirit Arts.'

Noel nodded, agreeing to her statement. It was suspicious, but he didn't really have any proof.

"Then, it's back to me..." Anna recorded the information in her mind and stated the second piece of information. "Although my teacher forced me to join the organization if I wanted to escape the marriage, it didn't seem she agreed with everything the royal family wanted. In other words, there was a chance that she wasn't on the same side..."

"No, more like she was on their side because it still benefited her. If the royal family couldn't give her any more benefits, she might leave."

Anna had seen it as well in her past life. The Third Prince worked together with her teacher. However, she didn't know whether the Third Prince gave her more benefits or she still worked for the royal family under the pretense she was the Third Prince's ally.

But having suspicion was enough for both of them. They might not have any concrete proof, but they had just started their investigation three months ago. And they didn't meet with them directly for a long time, so it was impossible to gain any concrete proof.

Since that was the case, Noel added, "Well, I have a chance to get closer to the Third Prince. He told me he wanted me to do something after I became a Spirit Master."

"Hoh? A Spirit Master? Interesting." Anna looked down, recalling the information about Noel. She wondered what the Third Prince wanted him to do. Since it required him to be a Spirit Master, she recalled all the big things that happened when Noel was a Spirit Master.

"How is it? Do you have any more information? If you don't, let's see who wins this time." Noel smiled.

"I'm not done yet."

Chapter 425 Important Piece

Both of them stared at each other. Despite putting a strong front, both of them thought the same thing.

'I only have one more piece of news. If he (she) still has more, I'll lose this battle.'

Anna and Noel smirked at each other.

Since she was confident, Anna was the first one to reveal her information.

"Alright. It seems the organization is the best place to gather the information. Due to the nature of the job, I can meet many nobles.

"As soon as I can avoid all the people trying to get me, I can start visiting the nobles that once supported the Third Prince. From the looks of it, the Third Prince hasn't given up yet, so I might be able to use the conflict between me and the Royal Family to get some information from them."

Noel closed his eyes for a moment. It was good information. If she played it right, there was a chance that she could investigate both the Royal Family and the Third Prince.

"Do you need their names?"

"No. I can simply get it from my father."

"I see." Noel thought for a moment. He didn't know Anna was out of the news.

There was a hesitation in his heart because he didn't want to lose. But it seemed he had to take the loss today since he hadn't met the Third Prince for too long.

He said his last piece, "The Third Prince is interested in the runes. I can take advantage of it to get him to reveal some information. Of course, I have to ask for your cooperation. The runes are too big for one person. That's why your role is important."

'You can use this kind of information as well?' Noel's words actually gave her some inspiration. However, she had to focus on the core of the discussion, so she asked, "What kind of role are you referring to?"

"Before I tell you about it, I have to know... How do you even know the runes? This knowledge shouldn't exist right now." Noel narrowed his eyes.

"Ah!" Anna immediately looked away as if she didn't want to answer.

Noel understood her and calmly explained, "Every time you told me about the culprits, it felt like you already knew what was going to happen. However, it didn't seem you could clearly see it as if you only saw it piece by piece.

"I don't know what your Spirit is, but that's the only thing I can think of. Does your Spirit allow you to take a peek into the future? Not the entire future but only a few images... It's more like a premonition."

Noel's expression became serious as he asked, "If that's the case, how much have you seen? Have you seen my future?"

Anna's body shook. Although it wasn't as much as reincarnation, it still had some relations.

"If you don't want to disclose it, it's fine. However, I need to know whether there is another person who knows the runes aside from you or not. After all, I'm planning to bait the Third Prince with the runes."

Anna paused for a moment before saying, "No. I'm the only one who knows about it."

"I see." Noel stopped asking. Anna was forced to respect his privacy by the Sword Saint, so he planned to do the same.

After the letter about his father's plan, he wanted to believe Anna for a bit. So, this was his decision.

Anna was thankful that Noel didn't plan to ask about her reincarnation. If she told him about it, she didn't know what kind of impact it would bring.

After getting the confirmation, Noel explained his plan. "I'm going to bait him with the runes, and you're needed here. I don't want him to monopolize the runes, so I'll spread it in another way."

"Are you planning to use me to spread it while you're giving the runes to the Third Prince?" After working as an inquisitor for a few months, Anna could grasp some of Noel's long term plans.

Noel even confirmed it. "Yeah. By spreading the runes to the entire kingdom and even the neighboring kingdom, we can stop the monopoly. This is simply too big to be kept as a national secret."

"No matter how scheming the Royal Family or the Third Prince is, it doesn't change the fact that our true enemies are the demons, huh..." Anna let out a sigh, knowing how hard it would be to completely rule the world. They couldn't even create a passage that led to a different civilization, so how could they even think about the world's domination?

And by spreading the runes to all kingdoms, the expansion speed would be greatly affected.

Anna couldn't help but ask, "Noel. Why do you want to spread it? I'm sure with your brain, you can even monopolize it without the Third Prince."

Noel smiled and spread his arms. He spoke the words that Anna would never think of. "You said the kingdom in our south is covered in sand. You said the kingdom next to it has a pool of water covering the horizon..."

"Don't you think there will be something more in this world like a mountain made of sand or a world under the water... I want to see them." Noel smiled brightly. It felt like they were outside and Noel would fly into the sky, exploring everything. He was free.

Anna's body shivered, not because she was scared, but because she was also curious about that possibility. That was right, they had been in this kingdom for their entire life. Even their parents or grandparents never set foot outside the demon border and beyond.

She knew the demons would be a huge threat, but they could find something no one had ever seen before.

A smile couldn't help but appear on her face. Her heart was beating loudly as if asking her to go. In her past life, she kept fighting Noel and died before she could do anything. But maybe, in this life, she could join hands with him and discover many things they had never seen before.

With Noel, she could do it. With him, she could do everything. She knew that feeling and that was why she was excited.

"That's an admirable vision. Do you think you... No, do you think we can do it?"

Chapter 426 Win Or Lose?

Noel raised his eyebrows and smiled. "Who knows? There are a lot of problems I have to take care of right now like finding my parents, rebuilding my family, and investigating the Third Prince. I can't give you an answer before doing all that."

"That's true. I also have to solve the misunderstanding between us and our families, regain the control of my family over the kingdom, and investigate the Royal Family. We have a lot of things to do."

"Yeah." Noel nodded in agreement. "That's why we have to solve all our problems first...such as our betting game this time."

"Right." Anna chuckled. "Your information gave me an idea, Noel. I have a letter from the Royal Family asking a Count to make me submit to the Royal Family. That one letter alone can't do much, but if I can gather a lot of them and spread it among nobles, I should be able to gain some allies to resist the Royal Family."

"When you pressure them so much, the Royal Family might need to show all their hands, including their relationship with the Supreme Devil Organization if they have any."

Noel widened his eyes in shock before closing his eyes, falling into deep thought. It felt like he was considering that plan since it was a bit reckless, but it turned out Noel was thinking of another problem.

He suddenly raised his hands and said, "I lost."

"Huh?" Anna dropped her jaws to the ground as if she couldn't believe what she'd just heard. Noel was a sore loser. If he had anything that could be used to win, he wouldn't hesitate to do it. Yet, the same Noel actually gave up.

"I don't have any more information that I can offer." Noel shook his head helplessly.

"Yes, I heard it all right. It's just... seriously?"

"Don't look at me with those eyes..." Noel's eyebrows twitched. He sighed, "I might be a sore loser, but I'll admit defeat if I lose. I'm not going to be petty to the point I'll have to resort to everything just to either win or make it draw."

"..." Anna was still too shocked that she couldn't say anything.

Meanwhile, Noel asked, "So, how should I do this? Do you want me to massage your shoulders now? Or we can go to an inn to massage your feet since you said you were tired earlier..."

Anna scratched the back of her head and thought for a moment. "Well, we should also talk about our missions here. Maybe it is related to each other?"

"I see. I guess we should get room to do that. Though, next time, I'm not going to lose." Noel harrumphed. Even though he had admitted defeat, his expression was completely unwilling as if she defeated him by luck.

"Haha, alright. We're done here anyway. You should know some inns in this town, right?"

"Yeah." Noel nodded and immediately led Anna to a different inn from the one he stayed at. After all, he didn't want anyone from the squad to meet her.

As soon as they reached their room, Anna leaped onto the bed while yawning, "Aaahhh... This is tiring. I haven't gotten enough sleep these days since I've been completing one mission after another."

Noel pulled the chair to the bed without saying anything. There were already a lot of tasks in Anna's hands. On top of what she said earlier, Noel still asked her to come to meet him and even became his errand girl.

At the very least, he could be a bit gentle on her this time.

"So, which one?" Noel asked.

Anna hurriedly took off her shoes and laid down on her stomach. "Of course, my legs. Don't worry, I washed myself before our meeting."

"I know. That's why you didn't sweat at all when we met."

"..." Anna had expected him to say those words, so she just rolled her eyes. From their conversation earlier, she also knew why the runes were spread in her past life. The only difference was the fact she was the one spreading it, while in the past life, someone else did it.

"Mhm..." Anna let out a soft moan when Noel began massaging her calf. It seemed Noel knew how much strength he had to put in.

"I thought you would be a sore loser and massage me with all your strength... And here I'm prepared to release my Spiritual Energy to increase my defense..." Anna chuckled, teasing Noel.

"Well, I know how hard you're working right now. Since I've lost, might as well give you some service so that you can work harder." Noel answered without a change of expression as if it came from the bottom of his heart.

"..." Anna was startled, not knowing why Noel became so gentle. She wondered what had happened to him in the past three months.

However, her heart felt warm. She couldn't help but imagine what would happen if there had been no conflict between them since the beginning.

While burying her head in the pillow, Anna said, "I saw your future."

"..." Noel glanced at her, interested.

"I don't know what was happening, but both of us were already on the ground, in dying breath. I didn't know you, but you knew me. At the last moment, you gave me your name."

"Hmm?" Noel frowned, not understanding what she was talking about. But after mulling it over, he realized Anna must be talking about the reason why she came to the Demon Banner Army. The rumor about her and her actual personality was completely different as if she had changed.

It might be due to her seeing that future that she chose to work together with him instead of fighting him.

"I see..." Noel closed his eyes for a moment. "Thank you for revealing it to me..."

Anna embarrassedly looked away. She had changed, but it felt like she only changed because of that vision instead of him. She didn't want Noel to think something weird after knowing about it.

But when she was thinking of Noel's reaction, she suddenly blushed as she turned around out of reflex, finding Noel had raised both his hands. "Hey. Where did you massage me earlier?"

Noel couldn't help but smile after hearing Anna's secret. It showed how much Anna trusted him. However, he soon regained calm and said with a gentle expression. "I'm simply planning to thank you for telling the truth."

"And how are you planning to thank me?"

"Of course..." Noel's turned into an evil smirk as if he had a great scheme in mind. "Full body massage. Don't worry. You will feel refreshed after this!"

"You bastard. You are going to take advantage of my body! I'm going to cut you down right now!"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"Kh... Sore loser." Anna gritted her teeth. She knew Noel was just using all kinds of excuses to make her suffer. He truly didn't like losing because he was a sore loser.

Chapter 427 Trouble

"Fuu..." Anna let out a long breath with a relaxed expression. Her body felt light after getting the massage. "You have a talent in this... Why don't you just drop your goal and become my personal masseur?"

Noel's eyebrows twitched, wanting to smack her right in the face. However, he dropped the matter since he had to ask her about her mission. "So, let's continue our discussion."

"Well..." Anna was a bit disappointed since she wanted to enjoy more of it. But her body was already relaxed, so she had no other option but to stop. "Alright. I'm here on a mission as well. What is your mission? The loser will have to answer first."

Noel shook his head helplessly. It seemed the victory this time had gone to her head. But since she won, Noel ultimately told her first. "My mission is to remove the demon nests built not long ago. What is yours?"

Anna looked down for a moment, contemplating. She seemed to have seen a connection between them. After a while, she said, "This territory might be under the baron, but the baron is actually a Count's subordinate."

"If we're talking about this area, then is it Count Elezar?"

"Yeah. That guy. According to my information, Count Elezar has been visiting the neighboring town recently. It seems that he is planning to do something."

"Isn't his city supposed to be five days away from here?"

"That's why I'm suspecting him right now." Anna nodded.

"Is there any rumor or speculation about his business?"

"We don't know about it yet, but the Count loves to eat demons."

"Love to eat demons?" Noel frowned. Although he didn't mind eating demon meat, he still preferred basic livestock such as cows or chickens. So, the fact the Count loved them meant he enjoyed the demons more than normal livestock.

And there was a group of demons around this city.

"Noel. When were the demon nests built?" Anna asked.

"Hmm?" Noel recalled the information and said, "They haven't discussed it yet since the Count doesn't seem to be releasing the information. However, it seems that the nests are built around one to two weeks ago."

"This..." Anna fell silent as if finding something. "This is weird."

"Yeah. It is indeed weird." Noel contemplated before raising a question. "This is just my speculation... What if the Count was the cause of those nests?"

"Are you talking about demon farms?" Anna narrowed her eyes. Her tone became cold and her expression turned grim. She had never heard anything about a demon farm in the past, so it shouldn't be possible.

At the same time, they might have been destroyed before the research bore any fruit.

"I don't know about it." Anna shook her head helplessly. "But if this is true, then I might be able to take advantage of the situation."

"Oi..." Noel's expression changed after hearing those words. It seemed Noel had thought about the same thing. But the fact Anna managed to see through that plan showed how much she had improved in the past three months.

"You were the one who told me to create an opportunity if there wasn't any." Anna smirked.

"Tsk." Noel clicked his tongue. "It seems that you have become sharper..."

"I'm not going to just blindly follow your plan. If I also know what you want, I can act differently to match it so that everything is perfect." Anna had a sly smile on her face. She stated, "I am going to mess your team up."

Noel scratched the back of his head with a troubled face. "I am a part of the Demon Relief Squad, so I can't divulge the team's plan to outsiders."

"But I'm not an outsider. I have left the group, but I haven't officially resigned from my position as a knight of the Demon Banner Army." Anna was proud that she could shamelessly say that after what had happened previously.

"Our plan is to destroy the nest one at a time. And we'll be striking the left nest first."

"Hehe, then I'm going to cause a ruckus in the right nest and bring those demons past the Baron's city and go all the way to the Count. When the Count is panicking, I'll investigate his involvement in this case. Hopefully, the Count worked together with the Royal Family since I could get some proof from him..."

"We don't know about it yet, but it's clear that we have to consider every possibility. In that case, I'm going to stall the group for a bit by going deeper into the nest so that they don't know anything about the ruckus in the other nest." Noel nodded in agreement. He knew his role in this plan.

This might be the first plan Anna devised herself and asked Noel to execute him. It gave her a lot of confidence, especially since the plan got Noel's seal of approval.

"Anyway, I have to ask you two things." Noel raised two fingers. "First, you can't show yourself to the group."

"Don't worry, I'm not planning to break your disguise." Anna nodded. "It's going to be troublesome to handle multiple Masters and Grandmasters after all."

"Then, the second thing is regarding the Count. He'll come at you with his soldiers. So, you have to maintain your distance from the Baron's soldiers."

"Understood." Anna agreed without hesitation. She knew the risk of bringing the demons to the Count, but this was the only thing she could do to mess with the Count.

"This is your first plan that we're going to execute together." Noel extended his fist. "I'll watch your back this time, so don't mess up."

"Haha, don't jinx it." Anna chuckled and bumped his fist.

Noel and Anna smiled at each other. They had gone separate ways, so working together like this excited them a little bit.

After discussing some details, Anna and Noel left the inn. Noel had to go back to the group so that there was no suspicion. The same applied to Anna, who was supposed to be in another town.

The next time they meet again, they were going to cause trouble.

Chapter 428 The Demon Hunting Squad

"Is everyone ready?" Paul asked, glancing back at his teammates. Next to them was the Demon Hunting Squad and they would be showing how they hunted demons.

Of course, this would be a good experience for Noel.

"Yes. Let's go." Jonathan nodded without a change of expression. If not for the fact they would be working together, he would have used a plank and carried them all with his Telekinesis.

"We'll be the vanguards. You can support us from behind." The Vice Captain from the Demon Hunting Squad didn't forget his passive-aggressive comment.

Paul and the others had gotten used to it, so they just shrugged.

The baron saw them off outside the gate as they ran toward the bridge located two hours away from here.

Fortunately, they didn't find any demons in the next ninety minutes. But the closer they were to the bridge, the more demons roamed around.

Their first encounter was with a total of ten demons, eight Low Level Demons and two Mid Level Demons.

Although Paul didn't like them, he still said to Noel. "Iadre. Even though you're a part of our group, look carefully at how they hunt demons. It'll benefit you a lot."

Noel nodded with a serious expression. However, he was also curious about trying it himself since practice makes perfect. He asked, "Can I imitate them?"

"Of course. The others will fix your mess." Paul was supportive since he wanted Noel to gain a lot of experience in battle. That way, the team strength would be boosted to a whole different level.

Noel then gave a thumbs up to Rose, allowing her to use her runes this time. Rose's strength was in her illusion, but these people didn't know about it. Even if Rose used Runes, they wouldn't connect it with Spirit Enchantment.

Since they had reached an agreement, the group fell into silence as Noel observed all the people from the Demon Hunting Squad.

Since the man with slanted eyes joined the ordinary army, the Demon Hunting Squad only had five people left in their group.

"There are ten enemies, I'll take care of the two Mid Level Demons. All of you will take care of the rest."

They acknowledged the order of their Vice Captain and began to spread their formation.

The demons seemed to be a group of cows. They had been demonized, resulting in a pair of humongous horns on their head. Even their skins had become pale as if they were fused with minerals.

As expected of the demon hierarchy, the Low Level Demons hurriedly charged forward to protect the two Mid Level Demons.

At the same time, the members of the Demon Hunting Squad increased their speed.

The short-haired woman, Becky, turned her hands into crystals. After that, she jumped forward, facing the enemies before anyone else.

"Haaaa!" Becky roared and grabbed two horns, which were supposed to be her targets. She used her muscle and spun her body, using the momentum to throw the two Demon Cows to the side, striking both sides.

"Moo?!"

"Moo?!"

The two Demon Cows ended up crashing into four other cows, leaving the rest confused.

But because of that distraction, the other members of the Demon Hunting Squad could unsheathe their weapons and deliver a killing blow to the fallen demons.

It was swift and precise. Becky even came back and smashed the heads of the two cows she had thrown earlier.

As for the remaining two cows who were still standing, the Demon Hunting Squad split into two groups and killed them.

With this, only the two Mid Level Demons remained. Their Vice Captain came forward this time. He gathered his Spiritual Energy into his fist before punching forward, sending the shock wave produced by the Spiritual Energy forth.

"!!!" Noel widened his eyes because the shock wave crushed the Mid Level Demons' heads before obliterating their bodies. There was clearly a difference in power between Paul and their Vice Captain.

"What do you see?" Paul smiled, noticing Noel's change of expression.

"They're amazing. That woman provided a distraction so that the group could eliminate the enemies quickly. They're aware of each other's abilities, so when they have to divide their group, they can do it with anyone. And in this case, they make a pair with the nearest one.

"Last but not least, their Vice Captain might be a muscle brain, but his instinct is quite good. I believe he's showing that power because he wants to show us that he's reliable enough to handle this mission.

"And more importantly..." Noel paused for a moment as this was the most important thing he found. "The only ones who used their Spiritual Energy were their Vice Captain and that woman. The rest only relied on their weapon mastery."

That was right. Even though the Demon Hunting Squad looked reckless, they still knew how to pace themselves. There was no way they would use a lot of their Spiritual Energy right away.

Noel's opinion about them had changed a lot.

"Should we do it too?" Rose smirked. "I can provide everyone with the distraction and even boost your abilities."

"That sounds good. Though, we might have to use our Spiritual Energy since some of us don't use weapons or have the necessary power to kill the demons in an instant." Jonathan nodded in agreement.

As he said, the only ones who could imitate the Demon Hunting Squad would be Stella, Ben, Paul, and Noel. Jonathan and Zion had to rely on their Spiritual Energy, while it was impossible for Rose to not use her Spiritual Energy.

"We'll let them do it for a bit until we reach an area with a denser population of demons. At that time, try it. It might be useful for our group." Paul smiled, giving them permission.

Their group was special since they had to do everything themselves, from construction to battle. So, they gathered all the knowledge they could and made it their own. This was the reason why Noel joined the squad in the first place.

Since they had permission, the group smiled excitedly. "Understood."

Chapter 429 Imitating

"We're approaching the bridge!" Paul stated while Rose confirmed the increase of demon population in the area.

"We will go straight to the bridge and think about the rest after we reach that place." The Demon Hunting Squad's Vice Captain, Richard, shouted.

"We'll be following his instructions this time. Take out your weapons." Paul warned his group as he pulled out his warhammer.

All of them nodded with serious expressions, knowing it was their chance to shine.

"There are sixteen demons ahead!" Rose shouted, informing both squads.

"We'll take care of ten of them. I'm sure you can handle the rest, right?" Richard asked Paul and his squad.

"Of course." Paul snorted. Although the Demon Hunting Squad was good, he believed his squad wasn't that far off either. After all, they were the subordinates of Clara, who was known to be an undefeated healer.

"Ben and Stella will become the vanguards. Paul can stand by and help anyone that needs it. Iadre and Zion will help the vanguards respectively, and Jonathan will conserve his stamina." Rose gave an instruction.

"Got it." They agreed without hesitation. They knew Rose was thinking the best for the team. Even Jonathan wasn't bothered by the achievement.

The vanguards sped up and matched their pace with the Demon Hunting Squad.

"Huh?" The people from the Demon Hunting Squad were quite surprised to see these people could keep up. However, they couldn't assess them since they had reached the demons.

Clink!

Blades and claws clashed against each other. The demons tried to stop their momentum before devouring them. On the other hand, the two squads planned to kill them as soon as possible.

The momentum they had formed wasn't that easy to stop. When the demons used their bodies to reduce their momentum, they ended up getting pushed back, providing an opportunity for these people to strike.

Ben waved his blade to the side, causing the monster to stumble to the side. At that time, Noel sliced the monster's neck by taking advantage of Ardagan's sharpness. It was a clean cut and the demon died without even letting out a sound.

The same applied to Stella and Zion. Both killed their targets in rapid succession.

However, the real contributor to this swift fight was Rose.

Rose provided them with two things. The first was the distraction. Right before they clashed with the demons, she released an illusion to disturb the demon's focus, creating a big hole in their defense. The second one was the Runes.

She utilized Increase Agility Rune and Strength Blessing Rune to boost their overall ability.

Even the people from the Demon Hunting Squad were shocked by how the Demon Relief Squad killed their targets so effortlessly.

It was more efficient than them. If the brain of their squad, the man with slanted eyes, was here, he would have seen through the core of the group, Rose.

But Richard could only think the Demon Relief Squad was hiding their true strength this whole time.

Feeling their place threatened, Richard gritted his teeth and exerted a bit of Spiritual Energy to kill all the demons.

He punched the demon in the face, releasing a burst of Spiritual Energy that blasted the head.

The power was so overwhelming since the head exploded. But his action caused his teammate to use their power as well, not wanting to lose.

They recklessly spent their Spiritual Energy. Even though the amount wasn't that big, it was still an important part when battling against numerous demons.

When Noel saw their reaction, he couldn't help but remember what his father had taught him in the past.

"I'm going to teach you how to be a leader." Luke smiled and raised his finger, "I only have one rule as a leader. I'm not asking you to keep a tab on everyone under you. You are bound to have a lot of subordinates in the future, so it's impossible to look out for each of them.

"You just have to pull them with your charisma. No matter how rough the situation, never show a troubled face. If you look lost, your subordinates will follow you."

Noel remembered it clearly and saw the meaning of those words. Because of their overwhelming strength, Richard thought he couldn't lose and release more strength. The team followed him and unleashed their power to kill the demons.

If he was like the leader in his father's mouth, Richard would maintain his calm and keep going forward. It wasn't like they were slow in killing demons anyway.

'A leader huh...' Noel muttered inwardly. He hadn't shown much of his emotion in the past when leading the group because of this teaching. As a result, he managed to overcome many situations while Anna still thought everything went according to his plan.

This time, the group managed to kill the demons within half a minute.

They stopped for a moment as they took out the Demon Crystals. And the one who carried the bag filled with crystals was none other than Rose.

She volunteered earlier. Because she didn't have any combat ability, she thought it would be better if she became the porter while maintaining her support and surveillance.

For Noel, it was a sign of her improvement, which he wouldn't reject.

As soon as they grabbed the Demon Crystals, they continued moving toward the bridge, killing numerous demons in their way.

It took them twenty minutes before they finally got a sight of the bridge. The bridge was made of paved stone and stretched over thirty meters. Underneath the bridge was a big river that flowed to the east and with a river this large, the bridge was vital for transport.

So, seeing the bridge's condition made Paul frown. Although it wasn't destroyed, it looked battered as if the demons had been hitting it with their bodies.

There were still some demons on the other side that seemed to be hunting fish around and ended up stumbling to the bridge, causing it to shake.

"There are demons on that side, we have to kill them first before assessing the bridge!" Rose shouted, pointing her finger at the demon's location.

"You heard her!" Richard nodded, instructing his people to hunt the demons.

Chapter 430 Like An Arrow

A few minutes later.

Richard walked to Rose while looking at the bridge. "What do you think?"

Despite his pride, it seemed he was concerned about the condition of his headquarters. Without the supply, they wouldn't last long. So, he wanted the bridge to be fixed as soon as possible even if it meant he had to ask for help.

"I can't give you any answer right now since I have to inspect every corner to check its condition." Rose shook her head. "We should be able to give you a rough calculation in fifteen minutes."

"Alright. My team will be on the lookout."

Rose nodded and walked around with Noel. She was the one in charge of teaching Noel about construction and how to roughly estimate their life from their condition.

It was an eye-opener for Noel, considering he might have to repair some roads or bridges in his territory.

After some discussion, Paul informed Richard. "The damage is a lot, but most of it is superficial. There is no crack on the main pillar and the support is well-built. But since not all of us can repair it due to the presence of two demon nests, we might need around... five days.

"It would help if you could help us bring some materials to replace the crushed parts. But it depends on your choice."

Richard looked down, contemplating. "We'll hunt the demons first. I think it won't take too long for us to handle all those demons. At most, one or two days."

"Are you sure? You're not going to check the nest's situation and calculate their number first?"

"We have our own method to measure the enemy's strength. It'll take at most one hour for it. If you can trust that judgment, then we'll be able to hunt them quicker."

Paul couldn't really trust Richard, but he didn't seem to be lying. He knew the Demon Hunting Squad was known for its hunt, so they must have their own ways of tracking their enemies, including calculating the number of their targets.

"Since a Spirit Grandmaster such as yourself is going with them, I'll tell them to trust your opinion, except it's too ridiculous."

"Fine by me." Richard and Paul reached an agreement.

Both of them seemed to have thought the same thing after working together. 'He doesn't seem to be that annoying when working together. He knows the priority.'

Meanwhile, the short-haired woman and their new guy were still skeptical about the Demon Relief Squad. They believed their squad was the best in hunting. But their new guy couldn't help but stare at Noel, who was at the same level despite being a few years younger.

The short-haired woman was observing Rose, who was teaching Noel, since she was the new guy, Shawn, mentor.

Of course, Noel and Rose felt their gazes but chose to ignore them. They just went straight to their jobs and after the assessment, they split up to join their own team.

There were eight people as vanguards. Richard brought Becky and Shawn as planned while Stella, Ben, Zion, Jonathan, and Noel.

"Alright. Since our target is a nest, I need to split up the team into three." Richard announced as his gaze fell on Noel. "You're the weakest among them, so you're going with me since it'll be the safest. The woman and the big guy can go with Shawn. Although he is still a newbie, he knows how our squad works, so I hope you two can provide some support to him."

"Lastly, the gloomy-looking guy and this average-looking guy can go with Becky. Becky is a killing machine, so you just have to provide backup."

They exchanged looks before nodding their heads, agreeing to the arrangement. Noel had no objection since he could observe their vice captain personally.

"Are we going straight to their nest?" Noel asked.

"Yes. We'll be moving like an arrow. In other words, if we see any demons, depending on their location, the respective group will handle them." Richard nodded, explaining it to Noel. Becky and Shawn seemed to be explaining the same thing to their own teammates.

As soon as they finished their brief discussion, Richard turned around and said, "Make sure you follow me. I'm not good at holding back."

"Yes." Noel nodded with a calm tone.

As soon as Noel answered him, Richard started running. And his speed was even faster than when they ran together.

"!!!" Noel was startled for a second, realizing Richard had crossed twenty meters in just two seconds.

Not wanting to be left behind, Noel channeled his Spiritual Energy into his muscles to boost his speed before chasing Richard.

As expected, even with this power, he still couldn't follow his speed. Becky and the rest of the Spirit Masters around them seemed to be able to follow, but Noel and Shawn had a hard time keeping up with them.

Shawn was utilizing a lot of Spiritual Energy to keep up with him, while Noel had to use his Increase Agility Rune to catch up.

Seeing how Shawn suffered, Noel also applied the rune to him.

"!!!" Shawn was surprised at first before gritting his teeth as if telling Noel he didn't need his support. Of course, Noel just ignored him.

The strategy actually worked. Whenever there were demons coming at them, each group would react differently. If the demons came from the left, Becky would take care of them. The same applied to Shawn on the right.

Meanwhile, Richard took care of the middle. With his power, he blasted all the demons in front, so there weren't many things for Noel to do.

However, Noel could see the essence of this strategy. By utilizing their speed, they could kill the demons while heading to their nest as quickly as possible. This way, the demons wouldn't have time to inform the demons around them, which would cause a chain reaction that might alarm the nest. Though, it needed a lot of Spiritual Energy to do this job.

'So, this is how the Demon Hunting Squad works. I've promised Anna to buy her some time... I guess I have to change my plan a bit.'